More powers to NPPA

50. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have delegated more power to the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority under which it can autonomously revise prices of drugs downwards allowing annual increase of 20 per cent in case of an unjustified price rise;

(b) whether the draft pharma policy referred to a Group of Ministers, proposes to bring the threshold limit down to 10 per cent in a year;

(c) whether a notification issued by Government recently enables NPPA to check drug prices in cases of extreme fluctuation; and

(d) whether, this would help NPPA to act faster against companies and also avoid duplication of efforts between Government and authority?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) The Government has delegated powers to the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) for fixation of prices of non-Scheduled formulations under Para 10(b) of Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995 (DPCO, 1995). Further, Government has also reduced the permissible price increase limit in 12 calendar months from 20 per cent to 10 per cent for more effective check on price increases. The monitoring of prices of non-Scheduled formulations is currently on the basis of data from ORG-IMS.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Subsequent to delegation of powers, NPPA have fixed prices in respect of 22 non-Scheduled formulations under para 10(b) of DPCO 1995. The delegation has facilitated in expeditious action by the NPPA to monitor and control the prices in case of increases beyond the prescribed limit with respect to non Scheduled formulations.

Food security

51. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the slump in wheat output threatens food security and wheat production has come down from 76 million tonnes in 1999-2000 to 74 MT this year and Government have been forced to go in for import of 5 MT of grain for the second consecutive year;

(b) if so, whether decline in production in turn affects Government's buffer stocks and public distribution system procurement; and

(c) if so, what are the concrete steps and the measures Government propose to take to meet the shortage of wheat output in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) As per the Fourth Advance estimates released by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation the production of wheat in crop year 2006-07 (to be marketed in 2007-08) was 74.89 million tonnes which is adequate to meet the estimated demand of 71.32 million tonnes in the country in 2007-08. Import of wheat for Central Pool is being resorted to in 2007-08 since procurement of wheat in Rabi Marketing Season (RMS), 2007-08 for the Central Pool was only 111 lakh tonnes against estimated requirement of about 150 lakh tonnes of wheat for the TPDS and welfare schemes.

Procurement of foodgrains depends upon a number of factors such as production, market